A Comparison of Design Thinking in Architecture and Industrial Design

Problem types

Architecture

Ill-defined problems (Rowe 40)
The end and means of the solution are unknown at the beginning of the process, but a final solution can be found.

Convergent Thinking (Rowe 41)
Narrows down solutions to find the ‘correct’ or ‘best’ answer.

Disposition

Architecture

Convergent Thinking (Guilford 469)
Narrows a Big Problem to a Small Problem (Rowe 34)
Designers usually start out with a fairly open project and must work to narrow down what the goal or end result will be.

Industrial Design

Divergent Thinking (Guilford 469)
Exploring different and unique ideas to solutions.

Shared methods

Architecture

A Solution Must Be Found (Rowe 41)
A building is most often the only viable way to address the clients’ needs and the building must be ready to occupy by a certain time. And so, a design, even if it is only “good enough” must be found.

Industrial Design

A Solution Continuously Evolves (Rowe 41)
Industrial designers can design a product and have it manufactured or sold, but the product can be redesigned, or another product can be made to solve a different problem.

Solution space

Architecture

A building is most often the only viable way to address the clients’ needs and the building must be ready to occupy by a certain time. And so, a design, even if it is only “good enough” must be found.

Industrial Design

A Solution Continuously Evolves (Rowe 41)
Industrial designers can design a product and have it manufactured or sold, but the product can be redesigned, or another product can be made to solve a different problem.